

**Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports Policy**

**Introduction**

Scoil Mhuire National School is co-educational mainstream primary school, catering for a full cross section of children. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parents on the provision of effective Special Education Teaching Support to pupils experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

In addition to class teachers, the school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

* 2 Full Time Special Education Teachers
* 1 Part Time Special Education Teacher (9 hours)
* 3.5 Special Needs Assistants.

**Aims**

* To enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
* To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs and to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils with special educational needs.
* To set out procedures for the enrolment of children with special needs in Scoil Mhuire and to assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to their child.
* To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
* To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with special educational needs. (L.S. Guidelines)
* To enable the school community to make appropriate provision for all pupils of the school.

***Enrolment of children with identified special educational needs***

(See also Enrolment Policy)

The BOM will consider the following legislative provisions in coming to a decision re enrolment of a special needs pupil.

1. EPSEN Act “A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with –

a) The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment

carried out under this Act, or

b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be

educated”

2. Education Act 1998: 15.-(2) d. A board shall…. publish… the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to ….the participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs, and ensure that as regards that policy, principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice are respected ….

To meet its obligations under the above Acts the school will, prior to the child’s enrolment, acquaint itself with the child’s special needs and determine whether these needs can be met having regard to the existing facilities in the school and any additional facilities that have been sanctioned for the particular pupil. The following steps may need to be taken.

* + Meeting between parents/ principal/class teacher/special needs staff and SENO, as appropriate
  + Obtaining copies/details of reports, assessments etc. from SENO, parents, …
  + Contact with Special Educational Needs Organiser, NEPS Psychologist or other psychologist/speech therapist/ occupational therapist, referral from other Agency.

The level of support the pupil should receive will be determined in light of current DES regulations and be informed by relevant professional reports and, if appropriate, the decisions made on these by the SENO acting for the NCSE.

The school will endeavour to ensure a smooth transition for both the pupil and the school through:

* + Parental visits to school
  + Pupil visits to school
  + Staff visits to previous school/special schools/special units
  + Making all school employees aware of the need for inclusion under the EPSEN Act.
  + Liaison with SENO to arrange for additional personnel, resources, training

Any health and safety issues arising from the child’s mobility and care needs will be identified and strategies developed to address them prior to enrolment. e.g. access, toilets, supervision, administration of medicine, intimate care, course for SNA e.g. lifting techniques

***Children with emerging special educational needs*.**

(The Staged Approach) (See Circular 13/2017)

***Stage 1***

Procedures for the early identification of enrolled pupils who may have special educational needs or learning difficulties.

The academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of pupils will be monitored through teacher observation, parental observations, use of simple teacher designed checklists.

Concerns regarding a pupil’s progress are noted by class teacher using observation, teacher designed check list and/or test copy and appropriate interventions are put in place.

The screening measures that are generally used in the school include the Belfield Test, MIST Screening Test, and the standardised reading and maths tests (Micra-T Reading and SIGMA-T Maths). Other tests for individual pupils may be administered in consultation with the relevant support teacher. These include measures to determine levels of general ability and measures to determine academic performance.

Where particular concerns arise parents/guardians are contacted with a view to exchanging relevant information and agreeing on a plan of action which may include classroom adjustments and adaptations to teaching and learning, parental input in the home, and referral to outside agencies such as GP, medical clinic, family services etc.

If necessary the class teachers at Stage 1 can seek advice from senior management in the school or from other support teachers.

If initial in-class interventions do not bring sufficient improvement the child may be moved onto Stage 2 following consultation with parents, principal, SEN teacher(s) as well as the class teacher, subject to the child meeting any requirements set out under the Learning Support Guidelines of the DES.

If concerns seem to warrant the provision of support at Stage 3 the school will endeavour to provide for appropriate educational assessment under the NEPS scheme and/or other assessments such as Speech and language and Occupational Therapy and advise the parents accordingly.

***Stage 2. Referral to Special Educational Support Teacher***

Supplementary teaching will be provided following assessment results, teacher recommendation, parents’ concerns, and in the light of the availability of resources.

Parental consent is given for screening and diagnostic testing if required at the beginning of each school year.

Early contact with parents to explain how Support Teaching can address their child’s learning needs will be made. Acceptance or refusal of service will be recorded. In the case of refusal further consultation will be sought to clarify any difficulties or concerns.

Over the years various time-tabling arrangements have been used with the aims of maximising support for individual pupils and minimising disruption to classroom teachers. Decisions regarding the overall arrangements are made by the principal and deputy principal in consultation with support teaching team on an annual basis taking into account how well previous arrangements have succeeded.

In the junior classes there will be a focus on in class intervention in the area of literacy using the PAT Programme with staff and parents working in collaboration.

Criteria for the selection for Support teaching-when the class teachers have scored the standardised tests in the month of May/ June learning support will be offered to pupils who have scored at or under the 10th percentile ( as per Learning Support Guidelines)in Maths / Reading in the following school year . Should staffing allow, support teaching will be given to pupils who have scored above this but who are deemed to be in need of some support. This may take the form of continuous support teaching, in-class support or a block of learning support sessions.

*Preparation of a Group Learning Plan/IEP/School Support Plan.*

* + In general it will be the support teacher who will prepare a child’s IEP/Support Plan/Group Plan in consultation with parents, class teacher and SNA.
  + The Plan may be individual or group depending on the nature and severity of the difficulties. Pupils at Stage 3 who have been diagnosed with Special Educational Needs will generally have an individual plan.
* Pupil progress will be reviewed by means of ongoing observations, informal testing and formal standardised testing carried out by support teachers or classroom teachers.
* If it is felt that a reduction or discontinuation of supplementary teaching is warranted based on reviews of progress the Principal will be notified and the parents will be contacted with a view to discussing the situation.
* Where there are continuing concerns about a pupil’s progress following interventions at Stage 1 and 2 the Principal should be informed. The classroom teacher/support teacher will document progress to date and outline concerns that may warrant referral to an outside specialist.

***Stage 3. Consultation or referral for assessment to outside specialist***

A decision to request an assessment by an outside specialist will only be made following consultation with the parent/s or legal guardians.

* Procedure for referring a pupil for assessment:
* Referral to Psychology Service NEPS by Principal/Deputy Principal
* Referral to private psychologist by parents or Principal
* Referral to Early Intervention or Assessment of Need by HSE
* Application to SENO by Principal/Deputy
* Principal Referral to paediatrician, child psychiatry by GP or NEPS
* Referral to speech and language therapist by parents or by school
* Referral to occupational therapist by Principal/Deputy Principal
* Referral to audiologist etc by Public Health Nurse
* Documentation required will be completed by the pupil’s teachers and will be submitted to the Principal.

In the event of limited availability of assessments through NEPS the Principal, following consultation with all concerned will decide on priority cases. Severity of need will be a prime consideration, as will such factors as securing future school placement and securing additional educational and/or care supports.

Where parents have had assessments carried out privately, the recommendations of such assessments will be considered by the school having regard to the criteria and guidelines set out by the NCSE from time to time and the available resources within the school. The school reserves the right to make resources available to those pupils who clearly need additional supports but who have not yet been able to avail of an outside assessment.

***Drafting and implementing an IEP/School Support Plan\**** (for pupils at Stage 3)

*(\*During a transitional period of introducing the new SEN model, both IEPs and School Support Plans will be in use.)*

Information included in an IEP will include:

* Learning strengths: based on teacher observation, parent observations, SNA observation …
* Learning needs: based on psychological report, teacher input, parental input, pupil input…
* Priority Targets for the pupil for a specified period of time
* Strategies to be used to achieve targets
* Biographical details and details of assessments carried out.

An IEP may cover a time period of up to one year. Some IEPs may be set for shorter periods such as half yearly. Progress will be reviewed in relation to the IEP targets on an ongoing basis according to a schedule set out and agreed in the IEP/

Participants in the preparation of education plans will involve parents and teachers. SNAs, and outside specialists may also be invited to participate.

***Inclusion***

Many practical steps are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are included as fully as possible in the life of the school and the classroom. Pupils with special needs participate actively in all school activities, assemblies, and special occasions.

Strategies to inculcate in students an awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities used in the school include lessons in RE, SPHE, and specific initiatives such as visiting groups, Friendship Week, Autism Awareness Day etc.

***Deployment of Staff***

The school ensures the most effective deployment of staff in meeting the overall SEN requirements of the school by taking into account the experience/expertise of teachers and SNAs and by closely examining the particular learning needs from year to year. The Principal, following consultation with staff, allocates teaching and care resources.

SNAs play a vital role in supporting pupils with special needs in the school. (see SNA Policy)

***Resources***

Individual teachers may purchase additional resources suitable for their own case loads. Items over €200 must be approved at a Board of Management meeting. Other items must be run by Principal/Deputy Principal who will discuss with Treasurer.

All purchases must be paid for by school.

All teachers have access to these resources and where practicable resources can be shared.

***Transfer to post-primary***

If necessary pupils who require additional support around transition will benefit from cooperation between primary and secondary support staff to enable a smooth transfer to post primary education.

The SENO is informed of all pupils with special needs who are due to transfer.

Educational reports are transferred directly to the receiving Post-Primary Schools. Parental consent is given as part of the Post-Primary Application process.

***Record Keeping***

The following records are maintained on children with SEN. The Principal retains copies of all psychological and other professional reports as well as copies of all applications for resource teaching hours, SNA support and Assistive Technology. Individual support teachers will compile their own records of on-going work and progress and pass these on when teacher allocations are made for a new school year. Some children may require an IEP. See Section 3 above.

Records of a confidential nature including professional reports are securely stored but are available on request to those entitled to see them.

When a pupil who qualifies for resource teaching leaves the school having completed 6th class all files relating to the special education of that pupil will be stored securely with the class reports of that particular year.

***Success Criteria***

Some practical indicators of the success of this policy include:

* Inclusion of pupils with special needs into our school
* Progress of pupils with special needs in our school as seen in academic assessments and social and emotional development.
* Parental feedback, including feedback as part of the IEP process.
* Feedback from teaching staff, special needs assistant, pupils, psychologists
* Inspector’s Reports

***Implementation Date***

This policy will apply immediately on ratification by the BOM. The monitoring of its implementation will be overseen by the Principal and SEN Team.

***Policy Review***

The operation of the new policy will be reviewed after one year initially and will then be reviewed after a period of no more than three years from date of subsequent review. Any legislative or administrative changes will be incorporated into the plan as soon as is practicable.

***Ratification***

This policy was ratified in September 2017 and will be reviewed in September 2018.